

What is the FMA?

The Family Member Appointment is a Department of State hiring mechanism used to employ eligible family members (EFM) who accompany career employees on assignment abroad. EFMs may work the equivalent of a federal career in various positions in U.S. Embassies and Consulates. As of May 24, 1998, with the introduction of the FMA, a 5-year limited non-career appointment, family members employed overseas are able to earn benefits.

Who qualifies for an FMA?

An EFM for FMA purposes is a U.S. citizen spouse or an unmarried dependent child at least 18 years old, but under age 21, on the travel orders of an American Foreign or Civil Service employee or military service member permanently assigned to a U.S. Foreign Service post abroad. The EFM must be resident at the sponsoring employee's or military member's overseas post of assignment or at an approved overseas safe haven or overseas alternate safe haven. (Other dependent relatives on the sponsoring employee's or military member's travel orders are not EFMs for FMA purposes.) Such dependent relatives may continue to work under other hiring authorities such as Part-time, Intermittent or Temporary (PIT) or on a Personal Service Contract (PSC).

What are FMA positions?

Qualifying positions are appointive local hire positions (including FSN positions), but exclude temporary need positions. Both part-time (16 hours or more a week) and full-time schedules qualify. An FMA may fill different positions such as:

- Community Liaison Office Coordinator
- Professional Associate
- Consular Associate
- Administrative Assistant
- Information Management Assistant
- General Services Assistant
- Office Manager, and many others

Positions that support on-going work for the mission qualify. Seasonal or surge need positions do not qualify for an initial FMA, but an FMA appointee on INWS could be activated for short term assignments.



How to apply?

Job opportunity announcements are published from post. EFMs may compete with some other categories of applicants (e.g. resident American citizens, Foreign Service Nationals) for positions. The Post Employment Committee will review the applications and may interview candidates. Priority must be given to EFMs (regardless of FMA status) on the best-qualified list. Guidelines for hiring and preference are published in 3 FAM 8200. If both the position and the selected candidate meet the criteria as set out above, the Family Member Appointment is made.

What are the benefits?

During periods of active duty FMA benefits include:

- annual leave
- sick leave
- Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)
- Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)
- Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)
- Thrift Savings Plan
- Executive Order Eligibility 12721

EFMs who have performed a total of five or more years of service in a PIT or other temporary USG civilian appointments (not PSC) prior to 1987 may be entitled to make a choice for current retirement coverage between FERS and CSRS-OFFSET. EFMs should check with the Department's Office of Retirement to evaluate the options.

EFMs who worked in any PIT position before 1989, regardless of the length of service, might wish to check with the Office of Retirement about the possibility of making a deposit to purchase full retirement credit for the pre-1989 temporary appointive service.

Under FERS, there is no provision for purchase of retirement credit for PIT or other temporary USG service performed after 1988.

What happens between jobs?

If the job comes to an end before the appointment expires, the family member is put on an intermittent no-work schedule (INWS). Benefits will cease while no salary is earned. Upon appointment to another FMA, benefits will resume.

Candidates with Executive Order Eligibility and on INWS (which holds the security Clearance) may apply for certain categories of Department of State positions.

Does being on a FMA guarantee employment?

No. Although the FMA is a 5-year appointment, posts can establish policies to require positions filled by EFMs to be competed periodically, before the actual expiration of the FMA.

What about allowances?

FMA appointees are not authorized overseas allowances in their own right such as housing, temporary lodging, transfer, education or separate maintenance. Such allowances would continue to derive from the sponsoring employee based on family size. The exception is danger pay which FMA appointees are eligible for in their own right, if the post has such a classification.

Hand carry all personnel documents during transfers.

Termination of FMA

An FMA will be terminated if:

- The employee in INWS status does not begin work in another position by the time the 5-year limit on the current appointment is reached. However, the EFM can be appointed into a new FMA upon entry into another qualifying position.
- Upon retirement or upon other separation of the sponsoring career employee (e.g., resignation, TIC, death.)
- Upon loss of EFM status (e.g., spouse divorces, child marries or reaches age 21.)
- Failure to maintain the security clearance level required for any encumbered position.
- Acceptance of an offer of employment under a PSC or another contractual relationship with the U.S. Government. (EFMs can be appointed under a new FMA after the contract ends and upon next entry into a qualifying position at a post abroad.)
- Other conditions as determined by post or agency management.

For more information

Family Liaison Office

202-647-1076, 800-400-0397

Internet:

[http:// www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo)

Intranet:

[http:// hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/flo.html](http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/flo.html)

General eligibility and other information on the FMA.

The Office of Overseas Employment

202-261-8130/8131

Information on policy and procedures for processing personnel actions.

The Office of Retirement

202-261-8960

Health Benefits/Life Insurance

Coordinator

202-261-8180

Please note that the information covered in this brochure is an introduction to the FMA and is not meant to replace a thorough reading of the regulations. All personnel matters depend on the unique work history of each employee. Family members are advised to seek professional personnel guidance.



**Family
Member
Appointment**

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